

I Have Crossed Oceans Of Time To Find You by thefutureisbright

Category: IT (Movies - Muschietti), IT - Stephen King

Genre: Alternate Universe - Canon Divergence, Alternate Universe - Historical, Alternate Universe - Soulmates, Alternate Universe - Vampire, Angst, Bill dies in this just FYI, Eventual Fluff, M/M, Romance, Temporary Character Death, Vampire Bites, Vampires, and when I say loosely I mean it, my warped take on a soulmates fic, some sort of graphic descriptions of violence but I don't think it's that bad, vampire soulmates??, very very loosely inspired by the novels Dracula and The Castle of Otranto

Language: English

Characters: Eddie Kaspbrak, Patrick Hockstetter, Richie Tozier, cameos from Bill and Bev

Relationships: Eddie Kaspbrak/Richie Tozier

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Summary:

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'the road that leads to Nowhere'

The road, connected to the main street running through the small town of Zhizn, curved in a gradual arc that halted before it even attempted to connect to another road. It stopped, abruptly, in the middle of an empty section of map, jutting out from the rest of the lines awkwardly, like the cartographer had become distracted and forgotten to finish it.

A small part of him, a part of him that had been born the moment he had

laid eyes on those six words, knew he'd found it. If Krov was to be anywhere, it was here. This infant part of him screamed with the lungs of a newborn, it's here it's here it's here it's here, and then, in a voice that wasn't his own, slick and dripping with rot, it spoke again,

seek Him.

[OR: Cartographer Richard Tozier goes on a solo mission to find, and map, the seemingly mythical town of Krov, and unearths a deadly secret]

1. Chapter 1

The sleepy town of Krov died in 1539, and no one heard its death rattle. Ask a historian, and they'll tell you that it was the pestilence that finished Krov off, that death had swung his buboed scythe just enough times to ensure that the entire town was swallowed by the gaping maw of the plague pit. Those who could afford to migrate south to Braşov did so, plague snapping at their heels as they ran. Those bound to the town with invisible manacles barricaded themselves in their small houses and prayed feverishly to a deaf God. Now dead, the body of the town sailed straight past rigor mortis and steam rolled into rot and ruin. Buildings crumbled, and wild flowers sprouted, vein-like, in the cracks.

The only building that remained stood proud and untouched by the hand of decay at the top of the tallest hill, a splintered pearl-white rib jutting out of a wound.

The town of Krov heaved its last staccato breath in 1439, and in 1893, Richard Tozier, hands scrabbling against pallid skin, followed suit.

Ever since he was a boy, Richard had been fascinated by maps. When he was an infant, still attached to his mother's breast, he'd watched as his father, back hunched and eyes squinting, had drawn the swooping, dancing lines of the town.

"Is that our house?" Richard had lisped when he was older, with a tongue that still felt too large in his small mouth.

"Yes," his father confirmed, "that's our house, and that's where the tree is that you fell out of, and that's where your grandmother lives, and that's where ..."

Richard had watched with fascination, eyes glued to the rustly piece of paper, as his father pointed at each landmark. His father told him that he's a *cartographer*, someone standing on the shoulders of the many great men who came before, men who charted the land with careful eyes and dancing lines. With his thumb lodged firmly in his

mouth, Richard had confidently announced that he wanted to be a *cart-grapher* too.

The tale of the disappearing town had fast become Richard's favourite bedtime story. When Braşov marched into the mists of winter, the nights drawing in earlier and earlier, young Richard could be found tucked up in bed, head poking out from under the thick, scratchy blanket.

"Tell me the story about the disappearing town again?"

At that, the question that came, like clockwork, at the time of year when the blustery winds hammered on the windowpanes with fleeting fingers, his father rolled his eyes.

"You know this story just about as well as I do, Richie"

And, as he always did, Richard would squeal with faux-frustration until his father, with a tut and a sigh, relented.

"Once upon a time, a long long time ago, in a small town called Krov ..."

True to his six year old self, Richard apprenticed with his father in the art of cartography when he came of age. Like his father, with steady hands, Richard immortalised the boundaries of his home town, the houses, the forest on the eastern most edge of the town, the church with its singing bells. Now fluent in lines of longitude, Richard slowly built up an impressive portfolio, expansive enough to rival even his fathers. Still, when the snow fell from the sky in great woollen clumps, Richard found himself sprawled on the floor in front of the raging fire, gazing up at his father.

"Do tell me the tale of the disappearing town, just one last time"

"That's what you said last year, and the year before that, and the year before that and –"

"I know! I know. I am a rotten liar, but please, tell me just one last time"

“How about you tell *me* the story, since I am now a weary old man,” his father scolded, the fire dancing in the watery sheen coating his eyes.

Shifting onto his back, Richard closed his eyes, and began to speak.

“Once upon a time, a long long time ago, in a small town called Krov ... wait, father?”

“Yes, child?”

“Why is Krov not on the big map in your study?”

His father rolled his eyes. “Why on earth would a mythological place be on a map?”

“Maybe people just haven’t put enough effort into finding it,” Richard mumbled, as he stared up at the cracks that divided the ceiling into fictional countries.

Richard’s obsession with the story of the disappearing town only deepened after that conversation. Blindly convinced that the town could never be anything but real, Richard devoted large portions of his time to pouring through printed collections of maps of the region, basing his search off the vague references to an unusually large and dense forest collected at the belly of a mountain range the town was near . Confident that he’d plotted the 100 mile radius that the town must be located in, Richard intensified his search, picking through map after map, going back four centuries, searching for the elusive town.

However, the search proved fruitless. Exhausted and bleary eyed, Richard scooped the pile of crinkly maps up into his arms, intending to throw them onto the fire in a fit of sleep-deprived impulsivity when a fresh, crisp map fluttered to the floor like a leaf carried by a lazy autumn breeze. Dropping the rest of the papers to the floor, Richard stooped and picked up the errant map, and inspected it.

The Northern Transylvanian Region (1530)

The map, though ostensibly entirely unremarkable, felt inexplicably

hot in Richard's hands, as if he'd just wrenched it from a hungry flame. Tracing the roads with a trembling finger, Richard's eyes fell upon a faint, but very obviously present, line that he'd not noticed in the previous maps. Dropping to his knees, Richard spread out the other maps of northern Transylvania, eyes searching for, but never finding, the line. Scrabbling once more for the 1530 map, Richard again located the faint line, but this time, looked closer. Bringing the paper but millimetres from his face, he noticed six tiny, blink-and-you'll-miss-them words, written neatly besides the line.

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The road, connected to the main street running through the small town of Zhizn, curved in a gradual arc that halted before it even attempted to connect to another road. It stopped, abruptly, in the middle of an empty section of map, jutting out from the rest of the lines awkwardly, like the cartographer had become distracted and forgotten to finish it.

A small part of him, a part of him that had been born the moment he had laid eyes on those six words, knew he'd found it. If Krov was to be anywhere, it was here. This infant part of him screamed with the lungs of a newborn, *it's here it's here it's here it's here*, and then, in a voice that wasn't his own, slick and dripping with rot, it spoke again,

seek Him.

Richard didn't recognise the name on the back of the map. He asked his father if he had ever heard of a sixteenth-century cartographer called J Alexe, and his father nodded his head enthusiastically.

"Yes, I worked with him over twenty years ago now. I haven't spoken to him in years, why do you ask?"

"No significant reason," Richard had replied, playing at inconspicuous, "I just found an map he drew a few years ago and was curious"

“Oh? I didn’t think he’d published anything for several years after – well. I think I have an old letter of his”

With that, his father stood from his chair, knees creaking, and shuffled into his study. Several minutes later he emerged, waving a crumpled letter victoriously in his hands.

“See, here. He said he was retiring from the craft, but the old devil mustn’t have been able to resist her siren call. Could you show me the map once you’re done with it?”

“Of course”

Taking the letter from his father’s hands, under the pretence of reading the rather dry conversation about cartography tools, Richard internally memorised the return address.

Dear Mr Alexe,

I do hope you won’t mind me contacting you. I am the son of Wentworth Tozier, I believe you worked together many times. The reason for this letter is that I found a copy of your map of northern Transylvania in the fourteenth-century, and I notice that there is a road marked ‘the road to nowhere’. I was wondering if you would be able to confirm whether this road leads to the city of Krov?

Many thanks,

Richard Wentworth Tozier

Immediately after finishing his letter, Richard folded the paper in half, before carefully sliding it into a cream coloured envelope. Impulsively, with the eagerness of a child, he all but ran to the post office, sending the letter off to, hopefully, reach its desired recipient in full health.

When he arrived home, his father waved a shiny black envelope in his face.

“This arrived for you”

Richard took the envelope from his father, retreated to his bedroom, and ripped it open.

Mr Tozier,

It is wonderful to make your acquaintance. I have admired your father since we met long ago, and it is a long awaited privilege to speak with you. I believe the map you are enquiring about is simply the object of a joke once played on your father, who was once enthralled by the story of Krov.–

A thick blot of black ink strikes through the next line, obscuring it so Richard cannot read it; the word ‘home’ barely visible near the margin.

–I assume by your letter that Wentworth’s indulgence in the story of Krov has not faltered, unless this obsession is hereditary. *These are li-* (again, *the rest of the line has been struck through in thick black ink*). I can assure you that the road to Nowhere leads not to nothing, but to something that cannot be explained using ink. It’s true that Krov no longer has a heartbeat, but it still breathes. Listen for it.

And then, right at the bottom of the page, scrawled in a crusted, brown liquid, two words.

seek Him.

The decision to travel to Krov, following the road that lead to Nowhere, came to Richard as easily as the decision to send the letter to Alexe in the first place. He had spun his father a lie out of golden thread, told him that he was going to travel north, up towards Zhizn (this, of course, only a half lie) with the intention of visiting an old archive kept in the town hall. Such a town hall, and such an archive, didn't exist, but his father didn't know that.

Richard left on a frigid Monday, breath visible in the air when he'd bid his father farewell at the station. The train, a rickety thing that jaunted across the Romanian landscape like a drunk staggering home, wound this way and that, until, nearly a full day later, it pulled into the station at Zhizn. Richard wasted no time wandering the windy streets of Zhizn, instead, he walked with purpose into the tavern, door swinging violently behind him. A stunned hush fell over the patrons of the tavern, as they all turned with dinner-plate eyes to stare at the newcomer with wild hair and bottle-top glasses. The young woman stood behind the bar, glass of honey'd liquid frozen in the air comically, stared at him with curious eyes.

"Glass of ale, sir?"

"That would be marvellous," Richard replied, and the quiet chatter resumed around him.

The tavern was fairly small, with a creaking wooden floor that sung out every time Richard took a step towards the bar.

"New around here, are you?" the barmaid asked, busying herself with pouring Richard's drink.

"Yes. I've come up from Braşov, I'm trying to find a town that's near

here, perhaps you've heard of it"

"Aren't any towns near here, Sir. Not for miles"

"Ah, but there is. It's on this map, see," Richard fished in his pocket, looking for J. Alexe's map that he'd folded into tiny pieces, small enough to fit snugly in the pocket of his jacket.

Locating it, he pulled the map out and unfolded it on the bar. The barmaid, expression a hybrid bemused-annoyed, stared blankly at it. With eager fingers, Richard jabbed at the road to Nowhere.

"Here, I have reason to believe there's a town at the end of this road, a town called Krov, have you –"

At the mention of the word Krov, the barmaid gagged dramatically, a great retch that sounded like it had been pulled directly from the very pit of her stomach. The noise startled Richard, his sentence extinguished abruptly like a flame.

"Are you alright, can I help? Do you need –"

"Stop," the barmaid commanded, sticking her hands out in front of her, defensively, "I need nothing from you. I just ... that place"

At that, Richard noticed that the quiet chatter had died down once more, and the silence hung itself oppressively around his neck.

"We don't speak of that town here, lad," a man called out, obscured by shadow, "not anymore. Not for centuries"

"Why ever not?"

"Brings bad things if you mention it. That word hasn't been spoken on this here soil for decades and we've been just fine"

"See, I was hoping that I'd find someone to take me there, I have no transport"

"There's no one here that'll take you. You best go back where you came from, forget you ever came here, forget about that ... place. No sane man would take you there" the barmaid insisted.

“How much are you paying?” the man from the shadows interrupted, slamming his glass down on the bar top.

“As much as it’ll take”

“It’s gonna cost you,” the man warned, but Richard shook his head.

“I’ll pay anything”

“It’ll cost you everything”

The man, William Denbrough, was a drunk. Richard learnt that almost immediately. As William stood up, with every intention of leading Richard and his luggage to his cart, but this plan had been interrupted by his inebriated brains inability to keep himself upright. Richard watched as William staggered, and then fell to his knees as if in prayer, all the while laughing rather manically to himself.

“Er ... Do you need help?”

“Naw, leave him be. He’s fine, just a bit giddy. Give him a few minutes and he’ll be right as rain,” The barmaid laughed, scrubbing the inside of a glass with a cloth.

“Is he here a lot?”

She nodded. “Every day like clockwork. He always says to me, ‘Bev, keep me out’, but his habit pays half of my wage, so, I let him in every time”

By that point, William had managed to haul himself to his feet, and was walking towards the door on unsteady feet. Richard said goodbye to the barmaid, and followed William out of the door. With rough, calloused hands, William threw Richard’s luggage unceremoniously onto the back of his cart, before clambering onto it and, barely giving Richard a chance to hop on himself, urged his horse onwards.

The journey took a little over two hours, and, try as he might, Richard could coax very little information out of his chauffer.

“How many times have you been to Krov?”

“I haven’t”

“Why not?”

“I don’t know”

“Do you know if anyone lives there?”

“I don’t know”

“Do you know when the town disappeared off the map?”

“I don’t know”

“Do you know *why* the town disappeared off the map?”

“I don’t know”

William’s mantra, *‘I don’t know’*, echoed in Richard’s mind for the rest of the journey, which they spent in uncomfortable silence. Thirty minutes before they stopped, William’s horse became unsettled, whickering and whinnying loudly. Fifteen minutes before they stopped, the horse began to sweat, despite the aggressive chill that seeped into Richard’s marrow. Five minutes before they stopped, the horse bucked wildly, eyes wide and white.

“He won’t go on, you’ll have to walk from here. I’ll be back for you in five hours, leave your luggage with me” William muttered, climbing off his cart and running a soothing hand down the horses sodden neck.

“I see. Is it far from here?” Richard asked, climbing down.

“No, a ten minute walk or so”

“How will I know if I’m in the right place?”

“You’ll know,” William said, and, with a grimace, continued.

“You’ll smell it”

With that, and without any further explanation, William Denbrough and his petrified horse disappeared back down the track, leaving Richard standing dumbly on the side of the dusty path.

Cursing William Denbrough and his alcohol-hazed brain, Richard had trudged down the path for nearly thirty minutes before he reached any indication that he was going in the right direction. As he pushed his way through a thicket of thorny bushes that obscured the path, a huge wooden sign loomed ominously overhead.

KROV.

Richard stared at the sign, unblinking, unbreathing. Krov. Seeing the word, written down in letters as large as his arm span, set Richard's blood on fire. As plain as day and night, as real as the sun and stars, there it was, written in chipped paint on rotting wood. Krov.

Richard scurried past the sign, finally breaching the border of the town. As soon as he set foot past the boundary, however, Richard was hit by an overwhelming stink. The stench of decay hung heavy in the air. It was a cloying smell, a syrupy stench that stoppered his nostrils with the scent of death, of decaying plant matter, of wood left in the rain, mixed with something Richard couldn't place. The sort of smell that attacked you, violently, unrelentingly, but the sort of smell you'd let assault you. The sort of smell you'd let devour you, consume you, subsume you. It was a smell that, deep in the hollow of his gut, Richard craved. Covering his nose and mouth with his hand, he pushed on.

The town, as Richard has expected, was entirely deserted. The buildings were nothing more than dilapidated old huts dotted slapdash along the main street, with the houses stood in hodgepodge rows like crumbling gravestones in a long-forgotten churchyard. Dead plants wound themselves around the houses, out through the windows, sprouting through cracks in the walls like hairs. As he picked his way down the street, stepping over centuries old detritus,

Richard listened to the click-clacking of his shoes, echoing painfully loudly in the otherwise deafening silence that snaked its way through the town. There were no birds singing their evening songs, no insects chirping happily in the undergrowth, no leaves rustling in the autumn breeze. The sky was empty. The plants were dead. The air was still.

Fishing in his pocket for his notebook, Richard began to sketch the lines of the town, using little boxes to indicate where each building was. It had always been his intention to map this town, to discover it, to immortalise it, godlike. However, the further Richard ventured into the town, and the more streets he wandered down, pencil scribbling furiously, the worse his headache became. What had started as a dull echo in his head had swiftly become a cruel bellowing, a great roaring between his ears that caused his eyes to ache and his stomach to churn. The wind had picked up, nipping furiously at his heels, and the thin overcoat he was wearing provided but little respite. Rubbing his hands together in hopes of generating some friction, Richard began to walk purposefully towards the nearest house, hoping to find shelter from the wind. However, a rogue and rotting tree root ensnared his foot in its grasp, throwing the entirety of his bodyweight against the house. The door gave way, splintering into thousands of tiny shards, and Richard fell to the ground with a loud thump.

“Son of a bitch!”

Richard’s head collided with the tough ground with a dull thwack, and he lay there for several seconds, groaning pitifully to himself. He lay on his back, watching as the dust danced daintily in the air, illuminated in technicolour by the thin strings of light that filtered in from the windows. Richard rolled onto his side, before hauling his protesting bones upwards. Standing on unsteady feet, he surveyed the small lodgings, that seemed to be just big enough for one. The house was cold, colder than it had been outside, and the sickly-sweet smell of decay was much stronger. Rolling his aching shoulders, Richard advanced towards the only identifiable thing in the room – a small wooden pallet bed – before recoiling in horror. On the bed, lying perfectly serene with its head on a straw pillow and its arms crossed over its chest, was a person. Or, more accurately, the remains of what

had once been a person. Taking careful steps so as to not to disturb the eternally slumbering corpse, he approached the pallet bed. The bones didn't move. Upon closer inspection, the rib cage had been caved in, and in the now cavernous and empty space, in the space where previously the heart had thrummed with the energy of life, was a small, brown leather book.

14th May 1539

Three more young men vanished from their beds the night before last. As before, all that remains is a bloody handprint. Mary came to visit, she tells me she is fleeing for Braşov in the morning light. I do not begrudge her this, but oh how I yearn to be taken from this place. I fear I shall die in my bed like a dog.

16th May 1539

They will leave me. I hear them, each day, children screaming, men shouting, women weeping. They will leave me here, to rot with the town. The chanting grows quieter each night. It does not work. For now, silence.

20th May 1539

I heard someone scream three nights ago. I have not heard anything since, not a whisper, not a groan, not a laugh, not a sob.

28th May 1539

I grow wearier and wearier each day. I am tormented by nightmares, of wheezing breaths, of hot saliva on feverish skin, of coal black eyes. It has come for me.

3rd June 1539

It comes each night. Each night, it stands by my bed, and it watches. Never speaks, only breathes. I, the coward, cannot look. I do not look at

it, and yet it looks at me. I feel it. Perhaps tomorrow I shall look. Perhaps tomorrow I shall talk to it. Tomorrow, I will open my eyes, and see what looks back.

The leather book fell from Richard's hands with a clattering thud. On the last page, written in an almost illegible scrawl,

seek Him.

Richard couldn't breathe. The combination of the biting cold, the skeleton lying peacefully on the pallet bed with a splintered rib-cage, and the bizarre diary had spliced together, reaching for Richard's throat with large, meaty arms. He had a job to do. That much, he could do. Chart the town, immortalise it on paper, and then never return. It was enough to know that it was real, to breathe the air, but he didn't want to be here, in this strange, silent, rotting world, any longer than was absolutely necessary. Richard left the house, relief hot and heavy on his tongue like treacle, but was stopped in his tracks by a monster looming over the town with bright, yellow eyes.

How he hadn't noticed the large manor house, with its illuminated windows and soaring turrets, when he'd first begun his exploration was a mystery. The mansion, large enough to perhaps be described as a castle, stood erect and proud atop a large cliff that overlooked the rest of Krov. Something about the house, something about the way it stood against the grey sky, unnaturally, as if, at any moment, it would blink out of existence, tugged at Richard's gut with slithering, persuading, hands.

Come. Come. Come.

As if on autopilot, with hurried footsteps, Richard began his ascent.

When Richard was nearly nine years old, his father had taken him on a brisk trek up one of the mountains near their house. His father had told him it wasn't a mountain, that it had been, in fact, just a medium-sized hill, but Richard had bitterly complained otherwise. To him, and his bean-pole legs, that medium-sized hill was a Promethean effort, a mortal trying to scale the side of mount

Olympus. This was nothing like that. This cliffside, at least four times as big as that medium-sized hill, was infinitely, suspiciously, easier. Richard expected his legs to give out at any point, expected his lungs to burn with the flames of exhaustion, but it never came. In fact, the headache that had been pummelling the inside of his skull continually since he began to breathe in the Krov air seemed to dissolve more and more with each step.

Soon enough, much sooner than he could have anticipated, Richard summited the cliff. His headache had entirely gone, and no memory of the debilitating pain remained. Staring at the mansion, the monstrosity that looked over the town with spiteful eyes and perfect stonework, Richard gulped. The windows, illuminated by a dim yellow light, stared back at him. Daring him, willing him, inviting him in with open arms and a hungry belly.

Richard graciously accepted.

The door opened easily. Stepping into the enormous entrance hall, Richard held his breath, as if the straining in his lungs would mask the clacking of his shoes on the worn marble floor. The air was musty, as if the house had been breathing the same air for centuries, but it was warm, a welcome change from the frigid air of the rest of the town, and it caressed the tundra of Richard's skin. As he progressed further into the bowels of the mansion, the door swung shut suddenly behind him, lock clicking into place with a loud *clack*.

Richard stepped forwards with measured footsteps, advancing through the entrance hall quickly, searching for something he couldn't quite name.

The mansion, he quickly discovered, was a rabbit's warren of twisting corridors, hallways that lurched this way and that, doors that opened up onto brick walls, stairways that disappeared into thick, deep black voids. In every room, propped up in the corner like an afterthought, was a small brass candelabra. A candelabra that had four lit candles sat in pride of place, flame flickering despite the unmoving air.

He was not alone. That much was certain. It was a certainty that he'd been sure of since the moment he began his ascent, and perhaps, in the deep recesses of his brain, since the moment he set foot onto Krov

soil. Even if it weren't for the flickering yellow in the windows, Richard knew that the mansion, the breathing body amongst the cadaver of the town, held the key to *something*. The same something that made the stench of the town so appealing, the same something that compelled him to pocket the diary he'd found, and the same something that drew him here, up that cliffside, a magnet, helpless.

A scream, blood-curdling and raw, ripped its way through the silence, and then, abruptly, as if nothing had happened, it stopped. Despite every fibre of his being willing him not to investigate, screaming at him to run, to run far, far away and forget about Krov, he didn't listen. On shaking, reckless legs, Richard walked towards the room where the scream had come from, opened the door, and came face to face with none other than William Denbrough.

William Denbrough's corpse was sprawled face up on the floor of the room. His face had been twisted into a mask of not quite terror and not quite peace, and the bones in his neck stuck out awkwardly, like someone had wrung him like a damp cloth. Blood was oozing in thick streams from two angry, rapidly bruising puncture wounds on his neck.

"He felt no pain"

Richard, who had been crouched on his knees in despair, slowly rose to his feet.

"He felt no pain. I snapped his neck as easily as a child snaps a twig, he felt nothing"

The voice, metallic and shimmery but human, almost human, spoke with quiet grace from the doorway.

"Wh-who are you?" Richard stuttered, voice gravelly and hoarse, a stark contrast to the velvety smoothness of the stranger.

"You know who I am"

seek Him seek Him seek Him seek Him seek Him seek Him

"You're ... You're – you killed –"

The stranger stepped forwards, and placed a hand on Richard's shoulder. Even through the layers of his overcoat and shirt, he could feel an icy coldness seeping through the fabric, leaking into his bones.

"Richard," the stranger implored, "turn around"

Richard did not turn.

"Turn"

"No. How do you know my name?"

"TURN!"

Richard turned, spinning on his heels like a top, and was confronted with the face of the most beautiful man he had ever seen. The stranger's face, though pallid and pointed, looked as if it had been chiselled from the finest of marble with the careful hands of Pygmalion himself. The man was slightly shorter than Richard, but he stood erect, with his chin jutted forwards, a challenge. He wore a long, sweeping coat made of the thickest looking wool, with a black cravat tied in an elaborate knot around his neck. His hand, that still sat on Richard's shoulder with a firm grip, was slender with a single, gold ring on the index finger.

"Richard," the stranger began once again, but Richard cut him off impatiently.

"You know my name. You knew I was coming," he stated dumbly, and the stranger nodded.

"I do, and I did"

"For how long?"

"For longer than you care to imagine"

"I'm rather imaginative, I'm sure I could –"

"For three centuries, I've known of this day," the stranger said, voice ocean calm, "for three centuries, I've felt you, anticipated you, I've

...” the stranger paused, staring into Richard’s eyes steadily, “I’ve *smelt* you”

Richard snorted. An ugly sort of laugh that escaped his nose without permission.

“Three centuries? Are you insane?”

“Quite the contrary”

“You snapped old Bill’s neck like it was nothing, like you do this sort of thing ...” Richard’s voice died in his throat. “*what are you?*”

“My kind have had many names”

When Richard said nothing, the stranger continued.

“Perhaps you’ll know of us as strigoi, lurid beasts who bite and claw and scratch and gnash their awful teeth, or perhaps your father told you stories about the moroi who visit naughty little children under the cover of darkness and drain their bodies of life, or perhaps,” the stranger stopped, a strange, ugly smirk blooming on his mouth, “perhaps, you’ll know of my kind by a different name”

Richard, growing impatient, wrenched his shoulder away from the stranger’s hand. “Tell me”

“*Vampire*”

The last time he’d run for his life, Richard had been seven years old with a pocket full of stolen candy. This time, he wasn’t being chased by the old woman who ran the corner shop. This time, he wasn’t being chased at all. He had taken off at a screeching run when the stranger had muttered that word, that word that set his teeth on edge. Although he had expected the stranger, the *vampire*, to reach out and grab him, or to charge after him, he could only hear one set of pounding footsteps on the dusty carpet – his own.

Soon, when he’d reached what he thought was the door he’d entered the mansion through, a familiar voice floated into the room, carried on the stale air.

“Do you know how many years I’ve waited? Do you know what it’s like to crave something that doesn’t exist, that will not exist for centuries? Do you know how it feels to smell something so intoxicating, so delicious, so *inviting*, and have to *wait*?”

“Fuck off!” Richard shot back, voice shaking wildly, but he was met with the sound of whooping laughter.

“You’ll be back. You’ll come back to me, eventually. You’ll come straight back, and I’ll let you, just this once, Richard, I’ll let you”

It took three hours of pacing the grounds of the mansion for Richard to decide to venture back inside. For those three hours, Richard stalked the gardens like a stray cat marking its territory, hackles raised and teeth bared. Something in his gut, deep deep down, was pulling him straight back to the mansion, and straight back to the stranger. It wanted him. Richard had experienced his fair share of lust, longing looks at the blacksmith’s apprentice with the strong arms, letting his eyes linger for too long on the chest of the young woman who taught the children on a Wednesday morning. This was different. This wasn’t lust. This was hunger. This was an insatiable, unquenchable hunger that only abated when he was staring into those watery grey eyes, or when he thought about pressing his body, heaving and needy, against the body of the stranger.

Before he could push the door open, he looked up, up to the top window of the tallest turret, and there he was. Standing in the window, looking down at Richard with apathetic eyes but a wide, manic grin, was the vampire. When Richard pushed his way into the mansion, however, the vampire was standing on the balcony that overlooked the entrance hall.

“It took you less time than I had expected”

“What can I say, I’m decisive when I need to be,” Richard tried to joke, but the words fell to the ground, flat, with a squelch.

“You know, when I smelt you in the mansion for the first time, I thought I was hallucinating”

“Pardon?”

“I had waited for this day for so long, I have been so *patient*, that I did not trust my own nose when you finally arrived”

Unsure of what to say, Richard decided not to say anything at all. This seemed to be the correct answer, as the vampire began to descend the stairs slowly, almost performatively.

“I’ve been so *patient*,” the stranger repeated, “but you’re here now, and my century-long wait has, I suppose, come to an end”

“Your ...” Richard muttered, pausing before he continued, reticent to hear the answer. “Your wait? Wait for what?”

“For you, of course”

“Me?”

“You” the vampire nodded.

By this point, the vampire had reached the bottom of the staircase. Richard steeled himself, but the vampire floated straight past him, but not before sending a, “*call me Edward*” in his direction.

Edward was, by all accounts, a terrible host. He left Richard standing dumbly in the entrance hall, unsure whether to follow Edward or whether to take off screaming. Eventually, predictably, he followed the vampire down the twisting, turning labyrinth of hallways and into a surprisingly cosy room. There were lit torches hung in metal brackets on the wall, the smell of burning wood hanging comfortingly in the air. In the center of the room was a plush looking velvet couch, upon which Edward was reclined, an Adonis in repose, arm slung lazily behind his head.

“Come sit”

Richard hovered in the doorway, causing Edward to roll his eyes.

“Sit with me, I don’t bite,” he said, before chuckling to himself, “although, I would, you know. If you asked me to”

“What, like you bit William Denbrough and snapped the bones in his neck like sticks?”

Edward hissed out a laugh, stretching his arms behind his head luxuriously like a cat until his back cracked loudly.

“That was entirely different. I had no intention of, uh ...”

“Of what?”

“Of turning him”

“Turning him?” Richard parroted, feeling faint once more. Edward, noticing this, rose to his feet.

“I really do insist that you sit. I’ll stand by the window, you do not even have to look at me, should you choose not to”

The couch did look inviting, all soft velvet and squashy cushions, so Richard picked his way over, sitting down on the cushions cautiously, like they might jump up and savage him if he moved too quickly.

“Is there anything you would like to know?” Edward asked, voice flippant and breezy, causing Richard to splutter indignantly.

“*Anything I’d like to know?!*” Richard repeated, “anything I’d like to know about what? Who or what the hell it is you say you are? What I’m doing here? Why it feels like I’m going to vomit out all of my internal organs when I so much as *think* about leaving this place?”

“Those are all valid questions,” Edward replied lightly.

“Let’s start with the last one, because that’s the only thing keeping me from running away as fast as I can and sending the police in to arrest you for murder”

Something shot across Edward’s face, something that Richard swore looked almost like hurt, but it was gone as soon as it had appeared.

“Your body is, um, well. Your body is bound to mine, and always has been. For centuries, we’ve been ... linked, I suppose is the best way to describe it. Linked through a metaphysical bond that I cannot even

begin to explain so do not ask me to”

“But –”

“I said do *not*,” Edward warned. “It is far too complicated. Your body is ... it knows that mine has ... changed”

“Changed?”

“Changed,” Edward confirmed with one short nod. “I suppose we were supposed to be the unlucky ones, the ones destined to be born centuries apart from their partner, but ... that changed. I changed”

“Oh, the whole ... vampire thing”

Edward flinched. “Yes. Do please be more flippant about it, you know how that *thrills* me”

“I don’t know anything about you,” Richard replied petulantly, but he sank back into the couch, relishing in the feeling of being surrounded by the soft cushions.

“You will. Know anything about me, I mean. You could know *everything* about me, but only if you want it. Only if you want ... I shan’t keep you here against your will”

“I can’t leave, I tried to, before, but I couldn’t ...”

“Eventually, when we have been sharing the same space long enough, the link will allow you to leave without feeling too sick. You’ll know it, though, for the rest of your days, you will never feel pure comfort again, but you will be able to live a normal life away from here. Away from me”

“And what if, hypothetically, I don’t ... I don’t leave. What happens then?”

“Ah, that’s something we’ll talk about when you’re ready, when you’ve decided. For now, we drink”

In a flash, Edward had produced two crystal glasses, and a bottle of syrupy looking red liquid. Richard, who had never been much of a

fan of alcohol, took the glass from Edward gingerly.

“Is this ...”

“It’s wine, Richard. Wine.”

“I knew that, I was just ... checking” Richard admitted guiltily, taking a small sip of the burgundy wine. It was sweet, and tasted like blackcurrant with a woody undertone, and Richard gulped it down happily.

“How long have you lived here?” he asked.

“Would you believe me if I told you it was so long that I have forgotten the exact length of time?”

“I suppose so”

“Well good. I do not remember when I arrived, but I remember when everybody else left”

Richard sucked in a breath, remembering the diary sitting hot and heavy in his coat pocket. “You mean the people of Krov?”

“I do. Even I, an undead creature of the night, get lonely. It is a very human emotion, loneliness”

“You’re not human”

“I was,” Edward spat back, venom dripping from the words. “I was, and I remember it so fondly, so vividly. I remember the crushing isolation, the months and months I spent without talking to another living soul that wasn’t my mother. I remember the hours I spent wishing I had a confidant, someone to share my wishes, hopes, sorrows, dreams with. And you, Richard Tozier, are that. You *supposed* to be that. My ally, my *partner*, and wish all you want that it was not be true, it will change nothing”

“So I’m your, what, your *soulmate*?”

Edward scoffed. “I do not believe in souls, but yes, I suppose the theory is the same”

“Only I could end up with a fucking *vampire* for a soulmate”

Edward hissed again, teeth bared sharp in his mouth. “I may have a heart that no longer beats in my chest but I am not immune to your barbed words, Tozier”

With that, Edward stood from where he was perched on the window sill and stalked out of the room, air buzzing in his wake.

2. Chapter 2

The rain hammered against the window with the force of a thousand raging fists but all Edward could do was sigh. The bedroom was oppressively warm. It was always so, even in the darkest depths of winter, the sort of stifling heat that made your back sweat and your brain ache with fatigue. The sound of the crackling fire mixed with the downpour outside created a heady mixture of noise that had become as normal to Edward as the sound of his own breathing. Any moment now, his mother would bustle in clutching a vial of swampy green liquid that – after pinning him down with her strong, meaty arms – she'd drip-drop onto his tongue, at the behest of her physician. Edward had never spoken to this physician, he hadn't even *seen* him, and yet this man charged his mother a hefty sum for his time and sent her scuttling off to the best apothecary in the region for various foul tinctures. Edward was not sick. He knew that, because his heart didn't hurt, his gut sat passively, and his head was clear. His mother, however, with her shrill tea-kettle voice, insisted that he *was* sick, that he had *always been* sick, and that he would *continue* to be sick for the rest of his days.

Francis Kaspbrak, baron of Krov and close ally of the King, had been felled like an aged oak in a civil feud between two warring factions that ended abruptly when Francis sank to his knees, headless. Despite having met the man only twice in his lifetime, Edward had wept for him, wept for the man he barely knew, wept at the command of his mother who loomed over him like an unforgiving God. What could be recovered of his father had been buried in a grave marked '*God have mercy upon mine soul*' and Edward had stared at the words for a very long time.

It was after his father had died, after the feud had died down to a gentle simmer, that the first people began to disappear. A child here, a young man here, a woman snatched from her bed in the dead of night by an preternatural hand, never to be seen again. Edward listened to the gossiping servants as they rushed around the mansion, whispering in hushed, frantic tones.

"The Andrei boy went missing last night"

“Three more people have disappeared over the last month!”

“Something must be taking them”

“Someone must be taking them”

“Lock your doors”

“Lock your doors”

“Lock your doors”

After the tenth child went missing, the door of Edward's small bedroom was locked behind him for good. Those four walls, decorated in elaborate tapestries of battles of yore, became Edward's entire world. His mother, frantic with an anxiety that gnawed at her bones, locked him in his bedroom on a blustery Tuesday morning and Edward, naïve and eight years old, did not challenge her. The only company he had was the piano that sat in the corner of the room, that sung for him when he asked with careful fingers. Six days and seven nights Edward remained in the torrid bedroom until, after enough pleading and a promise that he would never *ever* leave the mansion, Edward's territory was expanded to include the other rooms of the mansion. The door leading to the sprawling mansion grounds remained bolted shut, leaving Edward to pace back and forth in front of it, a caged jaguar craving the feeling of the sun on his back. He managed to strike up friendly, but entirely superficial, relationships with the servants, and they told him tales of the end-of-summer blackberries hanging on the bushes, bloated and plump, and how the air smelt after an autumn downpour. Try as he might, however, the door remained locked tight, only opening when his mother was *sure*

Edward was asleep, allowing supplies to be snuck into the mansion in the dead of night.

“It’s too dangerous, Eddie. Far too dangerous for you, a young, fragile thing. A precious thing, *my* precious thing. You must remain behind these doors where I can protect you,” she’d insist, wringing her hands.

“But mother! I –”

“No! No buts, no ifs, no questions. You remain here, where you belong”

It was no use. Regardless of how often he’d mither, how often he’d plead or beg, the answer was always the same.

“It’s not safe, it’s not safe, it’s not safe”

Edward remained under lock and key for over a decade, but on his nineteenth summer, eleven years after he’d last felt the summer breeze wick the sweat off his sun-scorched brow, he escaped. The day he chose was entirely unremarkable in every way, apart from the fact he’d woken up with a curious feeling in the deepest depths of his gut. It wasn’t so much an ache as it was a bizarre tugging sensation, hunger but not quite, nausea but not really. It felt like craving, like he couldn’t be, would never be, satisfied until he’d greedily consumed *something*, but the something remained hazy and masked, and he couldn’t quite place it. Despite his tender belly, Edward blindly made the decision that today would be the day he would feel the soil of the town crunch under his boots for the first time in many, many years.

Sonia Kaspbrak was a very, *very* heavy sleeper. Her guttural snores echoed nosily throughout the mansion, drowning out the peaceful silence, but, fortunately for Edward, they blanketed his careful movements, to such an extent that he managed to move through the

entire mansion practically soundlessly.

Earlier that day, Edward had snatched the key from underneath his mother's nose. She had been fussing over him, inspecting the whites of his eyes for any signs of pestilence when he'd stuck a hand out, lightning fast, and snatched the key from where it hung around her neck on a thin piece of thread. She hadn't noticed, and he'd disguised his jerky movement as a sneeze. With the key clasped between his thumb and forefinger, freedom felt leaden to Edward, but he pushed on, willing his trembling feet forward, forward, *forward*. He reached the door, wrenched the bolts back as quietly as humanly possible, and then, with a shaking hand, thrust the key into the lock, and turned it.

The door swung open.

Krov was silent. The air in the mansion was thick and cloying, and it coated the inside of Edward's throat and nose like syrup, but the air out here, the air that danced between the trees, rustling their leaves as they greeted Edward, was fresh and new. Edward left the sprawling mansion behind, skipping as fast as he dared down the steep incline that would lead him into the heart of the town. The mansion, getting smaller and smaller as Edward ran, shouted out to him with silent screams, but Edward ignored it. He knew that his mother wouldn't wake up until the first beams of sunlight began to stream through her windows, and that he had about seven hours to explore the town.

What sounded like a large stick snapped beneath Edward's foot and he jumped, lurching forwards wildly, spinning his arms in an aborted attempt to keep himself upright, but it was no use. He went down, head tumbling over heels, clothes ripped, face covered in thick, red clay dust.

"*Fuck!*" he hissed, a word he heard his mother use occasionally when the servants left the door open, or when she'd forgotten to give

Edward his swampy medicine.

He stood, trying to brush as much of the red dust off of himself as possible. The thing that had broken under his foot was smallish and powder-white, and Edward picked it up curiously, before throwing it to the ground with all of his might.

A bone.

It was a bone. A bone small enough to belong to a child, perhaps, and long enough to be a thigh bone, or perhaps a forearm.

“Edward,” a voice hissed from the undergrowth, “Edward, oh Edwaaaaard! Where is your mother now? Where is your captor now?”

Edward stilled, hand still extended stupidly. The voice continued.

“Oh what a brave boy you are, finally wrenching yourself from your mother’s womb. The world is ready for you, Edward! It’s been ready a long, long time. It’s hungry now, Edward. Ravenous, starving. You’ve made us wait, Edward!”

The voice was thin, watery almost, and it shook violently with every word, like whoever was talking was trying desperately not to erupt into raucous laughter.

“Edwaaaaard!”

“Who are you?! What do you want from me?” Edward shouted into the blackness, and the darkness roared back,

“EVERYTHING!”

Edward braced himself to flee, but a hand attached itself to his ankle before he could move. The hand was huge, and wrapped itself easily around Edward’s calf. Edward looked down, and was met by a manic, too-wide smile.

“Edwaaaaard!”

The hand belonged to a man, or rather, something that looked like it had once been a man, a long long time ago. Now, his skull was

misshapen and soft looking, like with one almighty thump Edward could cave it in. His face was ugly and pointed, with cheekbones that jutted painfully out of its face. The mouth, bared in a smile, was full of brown, stained teeth, but the canines, four of them, were inhumanly large and pointed like daggers, like fangs. Edward tried desperately to shake the hand from his ankle, to kick it from him with his other foot, but it was no use. The hand remained.

“What a strong little boy you are!” the thing mocked, *“how braave you are! Keep struggling, Edward. Keep going! Keep going!”*

“Ahcros!”

Another voice boomed from behind the tree, before a woman emerged. She looked human, all too human, the flushed pink of her skin a stark contrast to the greyish-green skin of the thing attached to Edward’s leg.

“Let him go,” the woman commanded in a voice as smooth as honey, “leave him!”

The thing let go, scuttling on all fours over to where the woman was stood. Edward, paralysed in fear, just stared at her. She was beautiful, with a long swoop of black hair falling down her back, pushed off of her face with a large red ribbon.

“Do not mind him, he has been this way for so long, long enough to forget his manners,” the woman said, gesturing at the thing at her feet. The thing was chattering to itself, grinning wildly.

“Who – what – what are – who –” Edward stuttered, and the woman laughed. As she laughed, Edward spotted four sharp, dagger-like teeth in her mouth but, unlike the thing by her feet, her teeth were bone-white.

“We have waited for you. Lucifer knows how many times we have tried to get into that blasted mansions of yours, how much time we have *wasted* trying to get at you. If only we knew you’d scamper out on your own, if only we knew we just had to let you walk straight into our arms”

"I'm – I need to go home. Let me go, and I'll say nothing of this, my mother won't know, she won't –"

"Your mother? Oh, your *mother*, of course," the woman shrugged flippantly. "She will do nothing. She will mourn you, perhaps. Perhaps she will weep for you, but she will forget. They always forget"

"Forget?"

"Yes. They forget, grief is such a ... wasteful thing. She won't miss you half as much as you think she will"

"Why would she miss me? Where am I going?"

"Where they all go, in the end. Every thing is just living to die, Edward, surely you knew this. But *you*, dear child, *you* are going somewhere different. See, you wasted my time, which is such a precious thing. You caused me *trouble*, Edward, and we can't have that"

"What are you talking about?!" Edward demanded, growing increasingly impatient and terrified in equal measure.

"Oh, you poor naïve little thing," the woman sneered, striding towards Edward. When she reached him, she gripped his head and snapped it backwards so that his neck was bared, strained and pulsing with life.

"*Drink*"

With that, the woman tightened her grip in Edwards hair, presented her arm out in front of him, and, with unearthly force, she thrust Edward's head forwards, down towards her arm, down with such power that his teeth sunk deep into her ashy skin. A cold, thick liquid filled his mouth quickly, and Edward gagged forcefully. The woman did not release her hold on his head, only laughed. The blood was foul, and tasted like spoiled meat; rotten and almost sweet with decay. After what felt like days, the woman wrenched Edward's head back, and, whilst he was still blood-drunk, she sank her own teeth into Edward's neck. Howling with pain, Edward gnashed his teeth

and squirmed beneath the woman's grasp, but she did not relent, did not release, just continued to feed. His heart betrayed him, as with every pulse, every beat, it pushed more and more of his blood into the woman's mouth.

"RELEASE HIM!"

It took Edward nearly five-hundred years to finally accept his changing body. His mother died five months after he disappeared, citing heartbreak as the cause as she moaned and writhed on her deathbed. Edward snuck in, once or twice, and watched her sleep, snorting and snuffling as she tossed this way and that.

The mansion that had been Edward's prison soon became his cell once more. He locked himself away in the mansion, which was quickly forgotten by the rest of the town, dismissed and feared for the bad luck that it brought upon those that lived there.

"The young master of the house died horribly, because the lady of the mansion went insane and slaughtered her son in cold blood! It's bad luck, it's bad luck, it's bad luck"

The young master of the house did die horribly, and lived, for five-hundred years, in solitude. In solitude, until on the 3rd January 1450 he awoke to find a pair of eyes staring up at the mansion.

Patrick Hockstetter soon proved himself to be indispensable. Before Patrick, Edward would find himself plunging his body into starvation mode regularly, until hunger clouded his rationality and he'd stalk into the town to prey on whichever poor, unfortunate soul he came across first.

The first time Patrick and Edward had talked, Edward had snarled like a cornered animal but Patrick, wide-eyed and curious, hadn't run away.

"A creature of the night, then? Are you going to bite me?"

Confused, and a little scared of the boy who did not appear scared of him, Edward blinked.

"I – I don't know"

"If I asked you to turn me, would you?"

"Absolutely not"

They'd struck up a curious sort of friendship. Patrick would visit Edward in the dead of night, and they'd talk, for a while, before sitting in something close to amicable silence, Edward tinkling the keys on the piano, Patrick watching him with those same curious eyes. When Patrick had first offered, Edward hadn't known how to respond.

"I'll get them for you, if you like"

"Get who?" Edward had asked, distracted by his fingers skating across the ivory keys of his beloved piano.

"The people – your food. I'll get them for you, if you want"

Edward's finger hit the wrong note and the piano petulantly spat out an ugly, disjointed sound.

"What do you mean, get them?"

"I can bring them here, you know. The people, the bad people of the town. You won't have to risk coming down anymore, you won't have to eat the good people"

If Edward's heart still beat within his chest it would have jumped. He'd spoken to Patrick at length about this, about how much he hated being forced by the hunger that squirmed deep in his belly like a tapeworm to consume, to devour, to kill those who did not deserve

their fate. The prospect of having Patrick bring him only those who did deserve a grisly end at the hands of a supernatural beast soothed this self-loathing somewhat.

“You’d do this? For me? You’d do that?”

“Of course, Edward! We are friends, aren’t we? Friends do *anything* for each other”

Thus, it began. Every two weeks, Patrick would drag a wriggling sack up the hill, movements disguised by darkness, and Edward would meet him outside the mansion, practically vibrating with anticipation.

“This one’s a rapist,” Patrick would tell him, or “this one killed a man,” or maybe, “this one has been stealing from the Church for *years*” and Edward’s feeding ritual would begin.

When he was satiated and suitably blood-drunk, he’d barely notice Patrick staring at him with unblinking, dinner-plate eyes.

This symbiotic relationship lasted for nearly a decade before everything changed. On a seemingly normal Tuesday, after Patrick had dragged the latest body up the hill, he asked Edward a question he had only ever asked once before.

“If I asked you to turn me, would you?”

After wiping his mouth roughly with the back of his hand, smearing blood over his cheek, Edward sat up.

“Turn you? Why on earth would I do that?”

“Why wouldn’t you?”

“I don’t – the only other ones I’ve met – ones like me, they were ... feral. They were *beasts*. I don’t trust them”

“You trust me,” Patrick shot back, lightning fast.

“Yes, but ... but ...” Edward scrabbled for the words, for the reasons that he shouldn’t turn Patrick, for the reasons that he should live in

isolation forever. As he thought, as he wrestled with himself, Patrick just stared at him.

“I can make the decision easier for you,” Patrick said, voice honey’d, “I can make it *much* easier for you”

“How?”

“I can tell you that if you do not turn me, if you send me down that hill still human, still *pathetically* mortal, that will be the last time you ever see me. Turn me, and you’ll have an ally for all eternity, do not turn me and I’ll leave you here to starve, or be driven to torment by hunger to the extent that you are compelled to feed on the innocent people of this town. It really is an easy decision, Edward”

The heavens opened, and rain began to pour heavily, soaking both men almost instantly. Patrick was smirking now, flashing his teeth at Edward confidently, as if he had already grown fangs, as if Edward had already agreed. Perhaps he had. The idea of an ally, someone to rely on for all eternity, was certainly an attractive prospect. Whilst this side of Patrick, this manipulative side that forced Edward’s hand, was new, and rather worrying, this worry was dwarfed by the loneliness that chewed at Edward’s gut.

“It’ll hurt”

“What will?”

“The – the change. It’ll hurt ... it hurts”

Patrick grinned, and a small part of Edward, a very very small part that he tried to ignore, knew this was a terrible idea.

Edward had never changed anyone else before. He knew how to do it, could remember from his own change, but actually having to do it, having to be the one to lead the process, was more daunting than anything else he’d ever had to do. Patrick stood before him, eyes

glued to Eddie's arm.

"I have to bite you?"

"Yes. You need to – you need to consume my blood. A fair amount of it. And then I – "

"You bite me," Patrick said, a statement, not a question.

"Yes. Then I bite you," Edward replied.

The worry that he wouldn't be able to stop, that he'd feed and feed and feed from Patrick until he'd grown fat and corpulent off of Patrick's blood until the other had been drained of life entirely flashed across his brain, but he ignored it as best he could.

After a few beats, Patrick shrugged breezily, before sinking his teeth into the fleshy part of Edward's forearm. Edward grimaced at the feeling of Patrick suckling at the wound his teeth had made, and tapped his foot impatiently as Patrick drank his fill. Patrick pulled back from Edward's arm with an slurping noise, wiping his mouth frantically.

"What now?" he asked, eyes wide. He looked drunk. Edward rolled his eyes, before grasping Patrick's forehead in one hand and the back of his neck with another.

"What now? Now, I kill you," Edward growled, before attacking Patrick's neck.

Patrick howled in pain, trying to strike at Edward with his flailing arms, but Edward swatted at him like a cat bats a fly.

Soon, after a minute or two, Patrick began to slump in Edward's grasp, and before long, he had passed out completely, chest heaving up and down rapidly. It took more self-control than Edward thought he possessed to wrench himself away from Patrick's body, and leave it on the floor, to die. It took about half an hour – half an hour which Edward spent sitting on the floor next to Patrick's body – for Patrick to stop breathing. He was dead. Edward picked up the body, with the ease of someone picking up a doll, and moved him inside. He placed Patrick's body on the couch, and waited.

Vampirism was nothing like the stories said, Edward soon learnt after his own turning. There was nothing glamorous, nothing enchanting about it. Nothing romantic, nothing sensual. All that vampirism was was a constant, crippling hunger. Edward had come to refer to it as his disease, a pestilence, a *parasite*, that he was forced to co-exist with in perpetuity. It took five days for Patrick to wake up from the eternal sleep of death and three days more for him to muster the energy to speak.

“Edward?”

“It is done”

“I am – I am – you made me -- ”

“I did,” Edward interrupted, and Patrick grinned, revealing his newly grown fangs.

“What now?”

Edward sighed. “Now, we feed you”

With that, Patrick’s eyes darkened. He stood up, and Edward expected his legs to shake, to watch Patrick comically drag his still-half-dead body across the room, but instead, Patrick sprinted out of the room on legs that looked as strong as tree trunks.

Edward blinked once, twice, three times, before he gave chase.

It took Edward almost an hour to find Patrick, but eventually he found him in a house on the outskirts of the town, crouched over the still twitching body of a young boy.

“Patrick,” Edward cautioned, voice low and dangerous, “step away”

“You have no fucking *idea* how good this feels, Edward,” Patrick babbled, voice high and shaky, “this is better than the best fucking I

ever got, better than all of the food in the land, better than – better than *everything*”

“Step *away!*” Edward warned again, taking steady steps over to where Patrick was crouched, slurping obscenely at the boy’s neck at random intervals.

“You’ve been eating random people, you know, I just thought you should know, it’s been totally random people this whole time”

“Pardon?”

“All those people I fed to you, I just brought you whoever I could find, whoever was wandering in the street at that time. You probably didn’t eat even *one* bad person, Edward, *Eddie*, how *funny* is that?” Patrick gibbered, laughing as he spoke. The boy had stopped twitching.

“You’re lying,” Edward said, but his voice was shaking slightly now, just barely, just enough so that when Patrick looked up, eyes huge and wild, he laughed.

“*Eddie*, you are quite stupid. Did you *honestly* think there were that many awful people in such a small town? Enough to give you fresh blood every two weeks for nearly ten *years*? Surely you cannot be that gullible”

“I thought ... maybe you were getting them from ... I thought”

“You *knew*,” Patrick brayed, standing up now, eyes and teeth glittering, “you *knew* and you let me do it anyway. You’re a *monster*, Edward, you know exactly what you are”

“Stop”

“*MONSTER!*” Patrick screamed, and then, suddenly, he was on the floor, pinned to the wooden boards by an invisible force.

“I told you to step *away*,” Edward barked, eyes pinned to Patrick’s neck. “I cannot trust you, you are just like *them*”

Edward placed a broad hand around Patrick’s throat, and squeezed.

Killing a sheep was much easier than killing a human. Much quicker, too. Edward had become very skilled at snapping their necks quick enough so they dropped like flies, quick enough so it was painless. He always chose the old looking ones, the ones with limps or the ones with large, bulbous tumours growing off their bodies. Never the ones with lambs. He'd snap the sheep's neck, hoist it onto his shoulder, and march it back to his mansion, careful not to leave any trace of his visit.

He'd had Patrick locked in the cellar for nearly a century. For over ninety years, he'd had the fledgling vampire shut in the darkness with nothing but the slowly rotting bones of dead sheep for company. When he'd knocked Patrick out with the powers he still didn't really understand, he'd made the split-second decision to lock him up in the cellar, a decision inspired by his mother. He hadn't thought about Sonia for decades, centuries even, but when he was throwing Patrick's slumbering body into the room, and slamming the large, metal door behind him, her moon-round face came swimming into view.

"Lock him up, Eddie-bear! Lock him up and throw away the key"

And so he did.

Seven silent months passed, and Edward could almost have convinced himself he had forgotten about his unwelcome house guest, but then, the screaming began. In the middle of the day, when Edward was deep in slumber, great echoing screeches echoed around the mansion for hours, and Edward knew where they were coming from. Of course, it was Patrick screaming, his starving body rejecting the vampirism, trying desperately to keep itself alive. Knowing that it would take another year at *least* for Patrick to finally enter a comatose state from which he would never awake, and knowing that that year would be spent listening to the screams and squeals of a starving vampire, Edward decided to feed him. Patrick remained locked in Edward's cellar for ninety-years, feasting on rotten meat,

his small sliver of sanity and rationality rotting along with his body, until he was nothing more than rabid hunger and distilled rage.

But this didn't last.

Edward had been lugging the carcass of Patrick's next meal down the stone steps when he'd spotted it, in the centre of the room, where he'd left it exactly three weeks before. The now decaying corpse of the sheep Patrick should have turned to a marshy goo. It was there, still in possession of all its blood.

Edward dropped the carcass he was carrying, and sprinted down the rest of the stairs. When he reached the bottom of the stairs, he hissed out a curse.

"SHIT!"

There was a gaping hole in the wall. There were claw marks in the stone surrounding the hole, claw marks and fragments of skin and smudges of blood, and it became painfully obvious to Edward that Patrick, in his mania, had scratched and scratched and scratched at the wall for decades until it had crumbled beneath his fingertips and he had escaped. For the second time in his life, Edward took off at a sprint down the hill after his monstrous creation.

By the time he'd reached the bottom of the slope, Edward knew that only one human life remained. The smell of death hung in the air like smoke, seeping out of every house, every window, every crack in every building. He could smell Patrick, too. He could smell Patrick's rage, Patrick's mania, Patrick's hunger. It stank. Edward made his way over to where Patrick's stench was strongest, picking his way over the corpses of the townspeople. The house where he found Patrick was small and sad, just one tiny bed in the corner, upon which an old man slept, or rather, was pretending to sleep.

Edward stood over the old man, wheezing slightly, the stench of blood overpowering, taunting him, *take a bite take a bite take a bite*, but he resisted.

The man opened his eyes.

As soon as the man's eyes opened, Patrick leapt forwards from the shadows. With a yell, Edward span on his heels, and pinned Patrick against the wall with nothing but his eyes and the force that exploded from deep within him. The force he didn't understand, the force he couldn't name, but the force that was getting more powerful with each day.

"Let me go! Edward, *Eddie*, we could have it all, you know. You and me, we could –" Patrick's sentence died in his mouth, and was replaced by incoherent babbling, and gnashes of teeth. Edward could feel something in Patrick fighting against him, something that was growing stronger, and stronger, until suddenly, without warning, Patrick wrenched himself free of Edward's gaze and sprinted towards him.

Edward flinched, expecting Patrick to charge into him, but the impact never came. Instead, Patrick sprinted straight past Edward, and plunged his hand deep into the old man's chest cavity. The man died instantly, a flame extinguished by a puff of air. Patrick wrenched his hand out of the man's chest, brandishing his still-warm heart like a trophy.

"See! With my power and your brains, we could – we could –"

Patrick never finished his sentence. Edward could feel rage bubbling up within him, his fury not only directed at Patrick for massacring the entire town, but also at himself for creating the behemoth that stood before him, face covered in the blood and innards of hundreds of Krov's innocent people. With a brutality that he had never felt within himself, Edward wrapped his palm around Patrick's face, lifted him off the ground, and pinned his head against the stone wall. Patrick, now feral with panic-infused anger, began to scratch feverishly at Edward's body, leaving great gashes in his clothing and skin, but Edward didn't give, didn't breathe, didn't speak. Edward just stood, stoically, bearing the brunt of Patrick's attacks, before he squeezed his hand, and popped Patrick's head like a child pops a balloon.

Edward burnt Patrick's body. He sent it down to hell, committed it to the inferno, in a blaze of flames and hissed curses. Now dejected and entirely, utterly, abandoned, Edward returned to his solitude with his tail between his legs. The entire town of Krov had died. It had died, screaming, at the hands of a monster that he alone had created. He was determined that he would never again create another monster, nor would he forge any sort of relationship with a human being again.

Two-hundred years later, Edward awoke one night with an all too familiar tugging sensation in his stomach. He had felt this tugging, this hunger, once in his life before. The day he'd been caught by the triad of vampires, the day he had died, he'd awoken with the same bizarre feeling in his belly. Edward dismissed it as pure coincidence, until, for five weeks in a row, he awoke with the same sensation bubbling in his gut. This feeling lingered, persisting for hours into the night, every night, as Edward stalked the castle in a rage.

Soon, the stomach ache was accompanied by bizarre dreams, dreams of a hazy figure that would speak to him in a voice too quiet to be heard. Then, the smell came. An enticing smell that danced in the air like snowflakes, that filtered through his skin, intoxicating his every pore until he craved nothing in the world so much as that smell. As the decades passed, the smell grew stronger, the dreams grew clearer and then suddenly, in late 1892, Richard Tozier began stumbling into Krov, head pounding, and Edward grew frantic with anticipation.

Author's Note:

new story heh heh heh

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